

THE MANAGER

TOP MANAGERS

By Bruce Dehm

Top consultants reflect on their highly successful herds

What Do Top Managers Do?

A laundry list of the successful traits of the best dairy farmers can be found any place that describes an extraordinary business owner. Organized, passionate, disciplined, curious, team builder, good communicator, ambitious, courageous, action-oriented, future-focused, trusting and pragmatic are just a few of these characteristics.

For a dairy farmer to be successful, a combination of these traits, along with a solid understanding of the biological processes needed to efficiently turn plant material into milk, and more cows, is required. Understanding a cow's nutritional, reproductive and instinctive requirements is necessary, but not a sufficient condition, to operate a successful dairy farm.

The question is not what successful dairy managers do, it is how do they do it? It is only by understanding how successful dairy producers act that we can learn how to improve ourselves. Dan Sullivan, creator of the Strategic Coach program based in Toronto, argues persuasively that the most successful business owners concentrate on using their Unique Ability® and delegate to others things that they are incompetent, competent or even excellent at doing.

Unique Ability® is defined by things you love to do and do best. You have superior skill and talent that others notice and value, and a passion for doing it. When you are doing activities that are your Unique Ability® it energizes you, and your desire for never-ending improvement never stops. The best keep getting better because they waste precious little energy doing things that others can do better than them.

Many people question whether they have a unique talent. The

fact is, these talents are usually hidden in plain view from the observer (that's you) because we assume that an activity is so simple, that it must be easy for everyone to do or understand. Additionally, because we love, hate or simply endure a task, we assume everyone else feels the same. The truth is, what may bore you to death, even though you are good at doing it, may energize another to no end.

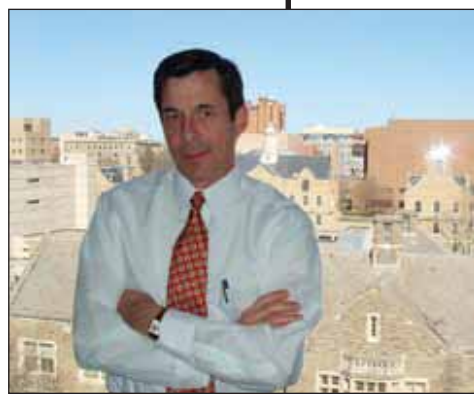
For example, you can reconcile a checking account as good as anyone, but after about 5 minutes, your skin begins to crawl and you find yourself hopelessly distracted by anything. Your spouse on the other hand, jumps for joy every time the books balance, never gets tired of it, and is always looking for the next opportunity for a challenge. It doesn't take long before your spouse can balance the checking account in half the time you can and finish with a smile (regardless of the account's ending balance).

Think of the thousands of tasks it takes to operate a successful dairy farm. Are you focusing your time doing things that are your Unique Ability®, or are you wasting precious energy doing things that you are good, or at the worst, incompetent at? Have you followed conventional wisdom and concentrated on learning more skills that are not your Unique Ability®, and ended up with a toolbox full of the wrong tools?

The answer to the question of how top managers become, well, top managers, is that by accident or on purpose, they have been able to focus on doing things that are their unique abilities. The sooner you discover and focus on yours, the more rewarding your dairy career will be. □

FYI

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Identify your Unique Ability®, what you love and do the best, and delegate the rest